

City of Somerville, Massachusetts  
Job Creation and Retention Trust

***Trustees***

Thomas Bent  
Vickie Choitz  
Lisa Cook  
Silvana Dinka  
Thomas Galligani  
Anika Van Eaton  
Rand Wilson  
Josh Grehan  
Matthew McLaughlin

**Minutes**

Somerville Job Creation and Retention Trust  
Wednesday, December 18th, 2019, at 6:00PM  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Somerville City Hall

In attendance: Vickie Choitz, Anika Van Eaton, Thomas Bent, Silvana Dinka, Rand Wilson, Lisa Cook, Thomas Galligani, Josh Grehan

Staff Present: Ben Sommer

Meeting began at 6:07pm

**1. Approval of Oct 1 and October 16 minutes**

- Approval of October 1<sup>st</sup> minutes was unanimous.
- Approval of October 16 minutes was unanimous. Thomas Galligani abstained.

**2. Updates and announcements**

a. Budget Update

- Ben Sommer shared the updated budget document.

**3. Discuss spending schedule**

Tom Galligani: We have a shared interest in making sure we would have the funds available even in times when there is not the same development. Housing linkage used to be five years of payments, now is three years, the idea being possibly to make sure funds are in the bank.

Tom Bent: Employers and developers need to see that there is a benefit to them. Other restrictions may lessen interest in Somerville than previously thought.

Josh Grehan: Expansion not going to continue forever. Safe to assume \$1.3m we pulled in this year won't continue.

Vicky Choitz: All the displacement happening now is an issue. We don't want to give up possible opportunities.

Lisa Cook: We want to make sure we can build good middle skill jobs.

Vicky Choitz: I think we need to see what programs we want to run before we can decide. It's hard to say what exact percentage of the available funding we want to spend or reserve right now. Let's revisit this once we determine our initial priority investments.

#### **4. Review and discuss public forum, comments, and follow-up**

##### **a. Superintendent Skipper**

The Board members introduced themselves.

Superintendent Skipper explained Somerville high school is performing very well, 90% grad rate and 0.6% drop-out rate. Phase 1 of her programming reduced drop-out rate – enhanced CTE. Now 77% of seniors graduate and go to college 20% declare they are going directly work. 5% are military or non-declared. Drilling down in 77% of graduates going to college, 30% don't ever matriculate into college. The next phase of work is finding out what is going on. Finances is a big part of why students don't succeed in college. Career skills – can't get job or can't balance work and school. Life skills – kids going from extremely supported in HS to being part of larger class where they get lost. Academic Skills – can't compete and give up.

One of the ideas we have is take the financial barrier of the table – going to community college or state school. There are two buckets in which students fall: those who are not Pell grant eligible, and those who do qualify but lack the other skills or materials and fees. Being able to fund \$6,000 scholarship would help these students. This could cost around \$150,000 total a year based on the number students. This is something we want to pilot this year.

It's also critical to provide case management. Students need to have a campus to go to. We intend to put someone at Bunker Hill who works for SPS and can help students succeed and can help navigate life scenarios such as food or housing insecurity.

In addition, some students don't have the documentation to apply for Pell. This could include around 25/30 students if everyone took advantage of it. District would put funding forward for student as well as go out for grants.

20-30 students; Largely kids of color and boys. Not ready to enroll and take advantage because they need life skills. We propose a one year gap program. Many kids need support but get caught up in justice system. In this gap year, Bunker Hill would co-teach math and humanities course for students along with SPS teachers. We would also identify industry skills and get internships/jobs for that year. Case management would included.

Tom Galligani: How many times a week would class meet?

Superintendent Skipper: Three times a week. They would still have time to work.

Tom Bent: Many students might be intimidated by going to college. Many are only going to high school because of the CTE program. Some people only go to College for certificate programs, not full degree. Remedial education is also so important.

Superintendent Skipper: Adding into the school district side we are adding into other programs to support our young men of color. This has been a consistent pattern.

Vicky Choitz: How much for the second program:

Superintendent Skipper: \$75,000 for 13<sup>th</sup> year. This would include case-management.

Vicky Choitz: Co-teaching is very effective.

Lisa Cook: Someone being able to see that they are being taught by a college professor and see that "I'm surviving" is great for someone's confidence.

Superintendent Skipper: Posse program is a cohort of students who are supportive of each other. We should not be settling for less than 65% matriculation.

Anika Van Eaton: I wanted to ask a clarifying question on the mix of the two programs; there is a 13<sup>th</sup> year and scholarship program?

Superintendent Skipper: This program marries the first three tiers of Success Boston.

Anika Van Eaton: Who would you see administering the program?

Superintendent Skipper: Could go through our grants department, or could go through City side.

Josh Grehan: It would cost \$150,000 a year. Wouldn't that stack year to year?

Superintendent Skipper: Pell is not the same every year. Often between four-fifths and ½ of students who are eligible take advantage of the grant.

Vicky Choitz: Do you think students would be graduating after two years?

Superintendent Skipper: That would be the intent.

Josh Grehan: What data would you be using to measure success? Matriculation?

Superintendent Skipper: Persistence and matriculation. Chelsea and Boston both offer versions of free college. Chelsea has the spirit right but is doing an early model. Boston doesn't touch students who don't matriculate.

Tom Galligani: What does your timing look like?

Superintendent Skipper: For this year's class. The two different parts of the program would get up and running at different times.

Anika Van Eaton: Could you review the caseload?

Superintendent Skipper: Around 30 boys of color, graduate, pass MCAS. Struggle with outside issues.

Josh Grehan: So there two cohorts – how many students for BHCC program

Superintendent Skipper: 50 Pell eligible, 25 not Pell eligible. Hire two case workers.

b. Ben provided summary of comments at the public forum

Josh asked if most people at meeting had a shared understanding of workers centers.

Vicky said that most people who are familiar with worker centers have a shared understanding of what they do; although, different people may be interested in different activities of the centers, e.g., workers rights, financial literacy, education and training, etc.

Tom Bent said that he was concerned that we might lose focus on training for jobs

Rand said that people did seem to get confused about the mission of the jobs board and is hoping that JCRT would address these issues. He noted that supporting the development or core operation of a worker center is not part of the purpose of the JCRT.

Vickie said that if they wanted to run wage theft training we could hire them to do that if they won a competitive RFP process.

Rand said that there are organizations working to get workers center off the ground. This organization is about education. If we are able marry these two ideas that's great.

c. Board members share their reflections

- Vicky felt that we got affirmation for the direction this board is heading in. Funding for coordination and data collection seems to be priority number one. Josh agreed that is a thing that is very hard to find funding for. Lisa said that this is a big issue in the education world.
- Tom G. said that City has been exploring this idea. Ben is putting together a job description and will go before City council. The cost-sharing between the City and JCRT could be fifty-fifty.
- Vicky said that Wage Theft training and job quality for HR and Small businesses seemed to get support from the community, as well. Worker's rights and responsibility training such as University of Illinois' 6-8 week curriculum provide some best practices that the JCRT could use. Also notes that Blake's comment on supervisor training was important as well. It would be great to have one organization to do both curriculums. Tom Bent said that businesses would bristle at the term "wage theft". Many businesses may just not have the resources to understand the law.
- Rand said that big part of HR training is the misclassification of employees. Greater Boston Legal Services and the UMass Boston Labor Studies could be service providers..
- Tom B. noted that we haven't spoken to the business community yet on this topic, so wanted to be conscious of making decisions without their feedback.
- Vicky said that gap funding and career navigation seemed to be a top priority for the community and the school district.. SCC noted that there are lots of training opportunities. Many are free but people have other barriers. There could be stipends for

Somerville residents in training programs. Lisa noted that Youthbuild models are \$200 a week, for those aged 18-24. Anika noted that this is a common problem for the PIC, too.

- Lisa noted that there is still a need for more training programs, too, so we should not lose that investment priority..
- Anika said that a new city staff person focused on coordination could manage relationships with training providers. Anika said that she could try and find report from Boston's Success Boston program (the model for the school district's proposed Pell Grant gap funding+coaching proposal).
- The board began discussing an investment in a local rapid response system to help workers displaced as a result of current development. Tom G. said that the WARN act (the federal-state rapid response system) focuses on larger employers. Nothing focuses on smaller businesses.
- Rand noted that AFL-CIO gets state funding to do rapid response.
- d. Approval of November 12<sup>th</sup> minutes
- This item was postponed to the next meeting
- e. Additional outreach
  - i. Business Community
- Tom Bent will check in with government affairs group at Chamber.
  - ii. USQ CBA
- Postponed until next meeting

## **5. Investment decision making process going forward**

- a. Discuss vote on initial investment package in January
- This item was postponed until the next meeting

## **6. Schedule Q1 2020 board meetings**

- Meetings were scheduled for January 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

## **7. Adjournment**

- Motion to adjourn: Rand Wilson made a motion to adjourn. Tom G. seconded.
- Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.